

Why We Must Put Our Trust In Jesus Alone And Not Invoke Mary – by Charles Chiniquy

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The Crucified Jesus And The Penitent Thief.

“And when one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, ‘If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Dost thou not fear God, Seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss.’ And he said unto Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.’ And Jesus said, unto him, ‘Verily I say unto you, today, shalt thou be with me in Paradise!’ (Luke 23:39 – 43.)

This sublime dialogue between Jesus dying on the Cross and the repenting sinner, is the most touching summary of the design of the mission of Jesus Christ upon earth, as it is the measure of the unlimited confidence that the penitent sinner ought to place in the mercy of the Saviour. A few reflections upon what passed and was said upon these two crosses, are sufficient to enable us to comprehend the injury that the Church of Rome does to the Holy Virgin and to the gospel, in her efforts to turn the thoughts and the hearts of sinners towards Mary, as the most solid foundation of their salvation.

During this dialogue between the Saviour and the penitent thief, St. John tells us that Mary was at the foot of the cross; then, we can believe that she knew what was passing there. And how she must have felt her heart thrill with joy, in spite of her bitter grief, when she heard with loving kindness Jesus saying to the companion of his sufferings, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

No doubt that the faith and conversion of the thief were infinitely pleasing to the holy mother of Jesus, and that they brought, for a moment, a happy diversion from her sorrows.

The spectacle which is presented to us upon Calvary is one of such sublimity and grandeur that man will never be able worthily to describe it. Whilst our thoughts go toward Jesus and the penitent thief, and whilst, in the stillness of reflection and meditation, we call to remembrance the words that these two sufferers on the cross interchanged, we feel ourselves penetrated by such a sentiment of love and confidence in the Saviour, that we can no longer speak of him but with tears. We feel that to distrust Jesus, or doubt His love and mercy for sinners, is one of the greatest crimes of which man can be guilty.

But let us suppose that the penitent thief, instead of addressing the crucified Jesus, and turning all the thoughts and affections of his heart

toward the Saviour of the world, had turned his thoughts and hopes towards Mary, as the Roman Church advises all sinners, and especially dying sinners, to do – suppose the penitent thief, instead of saying to Jesus, “Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” had said what all the popes, bishops and priests of Rome put into the mouth of sinners,

“Lord Jesus, I have been so wicked that I do not deserve to speak to you, nor to be heard by you. But, behold your mother! Her female heart must naturally be more feeling and more compassionate than yours; she, then, will listen to me better than you will; she will be more easily touched with pity for my unfortunate lot than you. Do not take it amiss, then, that I should address myself to her in preference to you, in order to get help in the miseries that oppress me. I dare not speak to you myself, for you are the Holy of Holies, and I am a miserable sinner. But I will speak to you through your mother; she will demand from you grace and mercy for me. A good son refuses nothing to his mother! You cannot, then, refuse her what she will ask of you for me; for she has an authority over you that you cannot disown. The favor which, then, you would refuse to a criminal like me, will be easily granted to her, whom you can not refuse anything. You are come into the world, I know, armed with the inexorable justice of your Father to punish the guilty. But whilst God the Father has given to you the mission of justice and chastisement, He has given to your mother the mission of mercy and pardon. I know that without Mary I am lost; for it is she that is the gate at heaven, the refuge of sinners. My chosen advocate is your mother; I fear nothing, for I know you can refuse nothing.”

We ask all men to whom God has given a spark of Christian intelligence, would such language in the mouth of the thief have been suitable? Would it have pleased and honored the Holy Virgin? In one word, would it have obtained from the Saviour this answer: “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise?”

Roman Catholics who read these lines, do you not understand that each of these words, if they had been spoken by the thief on the cross, would have been blasphemy – an outrage on Jesus Christ, and an insult to the Holy Virgin? But see, now without any exaggeration, the sentiments with which your Roman Church wishes to inspire you! You know that these are the very words which she makes you learn by heart, that she makes you read in all your books, and that she announces to you by her priests, in order that you should address them to Jesus Christ!

Let us go on and suppose that, after this language was addressed to Jesus upon the Cross, the thief, speaking to the Holy Virgin, had said to her,

“O Mary, the refuge of sinners, you are the only foundation of my hope and of my faith; you are the gate of heaven, the consolation of the afflicted, the salvation of sinners! It is through you alone that all the grace and blessings of heaven descend upon the earth! It is by you alone that all errors, heresies and sins are destroyed in the world! Whilst your son Jesus has for his mission to cause the inexorable justice of the Father to reign in the world, it is your part to execute mercy... All those who put their confidence in you, and invoke the all-

powerful aid of your prayers will be saved! The arms of your son are always raised to punish and crush the sinner; it is yours, I know, to prevent his avenging arm from striking. I see that your son is angry with me; I feel that I have deserved his wrath. Be pleased then, O Mary, to appease him, and ask of him grace for me, for I am so guilty that he will not listen to me if I speak to him! I put my salvation in your hands; I make myself your child, your servant, your slave. Regard me with compassion, since I deplore my sins. Cause him to remember you are his mother, and by that title you have full authority over him. O Mary, my hope and refuge, I throw myself in your arms. Save me!"

Once more, we ask of the brethren of the Roman Church, would not each of these words, in the mouth of the thief on the cross, have been blasphemous against Christ? Would they not have been an insult to the Holy Virgin? Would the humble Mary, at the foot of Calvary, have received with pleasure these insipid praises? Would she have felt herself honored by these sacrilegious prayers which the Roman Catholics repeat every day? No, a thousand times no! Never would the Holy Virgin at the foot of Calvary, whilst the blood of the great victim was falling drop by drop from the cross, have consented to have heard herself called the salvation of the world, the hope of sinners, the gate of heaven; she would have repelled with horror these words of blasphemy; she would have replied to the thief:

"Ah! wretch, when so near him who atones for the sins of the world, covered with his blood, a witness of his patience, of his mildness, and of his love even to his murderers, how can you doubt his pity for you? If I am his mother according to the flesh, he is my God, he is my Saviour, as well as yours, by his grace. Do you not know that it was to seek and to save sinners that he descended from heaven; that it is for sinners that his body is broken, his head lacerated by the thorns, his hands and his feet pierced by the nails, and it is from love for sinners that his blood is flowing and that he will soon expire? He has spent his life in calling sinners to himself. To the greatest among them he said: 'Come unto me and you shall be consoled and pardoned.' His wish was to be with sinners – he was called the friend of sinners. Do not fear, then, to speak to him, for he is your most sincere friend.

See the marks of mildness and love which shine through the blood which covers his face. It is he alone who is the salvation of the world, the refuge of sinners, the gate of heaven. It is on his name alone we must call to be saved. Your want of faith in his mercy and love for you causes him more suffering than the nails which pierce his hands and feet. In order to obtain the grace and pardon you need, address yourself to him, and to Him alone, for he only is your true friend – your brother, full of affection – your father, full of love, and your merciful Saviour. Speak to him, then, yourself, and do hear from his mouth the sentence of pardon which is already written in his heart! But cease to insult him, and to insult me thus, by thinking I can love you more than he loves you, and that I can be more compassionate towards you than he is himself!"

Let not our dear brethren, who are still in the bonds of Romish superstition,

be deceived by the idea that that which would have been unsuitable and blasphemous in the mouth of the penitent thief is altogether suitable and Christian today, when Jesus is in heaven. For our Lord, although in heaven, is as near to every sinner, to hear and pardon him, as he was to the thief on the cross; His ear is no further distant from the mouth of the sinner who, today, asks mercy from Him than it was from the crucified thief; His heart is not less kind and compassionate today than it was at the day of His death; poor sinners are not less dear to Him today than then. And He has no more need now than then to be forced by His mother to pardon the penitent sinner.

The penitent thief had no need of an intercessor to touch the heart of Jesus... Although the mother of the Saviour was there present, he had not even a thought of addressing her. He understood that Jesus was his friend, his Saviour and his God; and he did not deceive himself... He put in Jesus, and Jesus alone, all his hope, and he was not disappointed. He spoke boldly to Jesus as one speaks to a friend, to a dear brother, and he did well; for it was thus, as it is still thus, that Jesus wishes that we should speak to him.

And to assert that Jesus has more need, today, than he had then to be urged and roused or appeased by his mother, in order to hear sinners who return to him, would be a childish absurdity, if not an awful blasphemy.

When God, in His great mercy, opens the eyes of a Roman Catholic to the errors of his church, the first sentiment which he experiences is one of unspeakable joy for the favor which he has received. But the second thing which strikes his mind and heart is a feeling of astonishment at the facility and sort of sincerity with which he has received and believed, as incontestable truths, errors and superstitions the most palpable and anti-Christian.

Now, the error which is dearest and most deep-rooted in the heart of a Roman Catholic is, that the shortest and surest way to be heard by Jesus Christ, and to draw upon us a look of His mercy, is not to speak to him directly ourselves, but to get some of the saints in heaven, that we believe are most dear to His heart, to speak to him in our behalf. In order to support this error, all the modern theologians of the Church of Rome assure us that Jesus, being the Holy of Holies, it is quite natural that He should listen with more pleasure to the voice of one of the elect in heaven than to that of a sinner, such as we all are. The Church of Rome, then, assures us that the saints in heaven whom I address will hear me with more pleasure, facility, readiness, mercy and love than Jesus Christ would do.

For if the Church of Rome, returning to the evangelical truth, which she has so long forgotten, should say to a sinner, "There is no saint in heaven who loves you so much as Jesus Christ; there is no ear so attentive as His to the voice of our repentance; there is not in heaven a mind or heart so easily or so mercifully touched with compassion for all our miseries as the soul of Jesus Christ; there is not a person in heaven who can have so much pleasure in hearing himself invoked and in seeing himself approached by the penitent sinner as Jesus, the people would put all their confidence in Jesus, and in Jesus alone, and would address him as the gospel directs.

In short, would it not be the height of folly in any case to go to any but Jesus to obtain any favors.

If the Church of Rome, instead of losing herself and wandering away into foolish and vain traditions, would keep to the word of God, she would say, with St. Paul, "And I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." (Philippians, 3:8.) If, laying aside the deplorable sophisms which form the basis of her worship of the saints, the Church of Rome would hold the language of Evangelical Truth, her people everywhere would know that in Jesus and in Jesus alone, they have all the treasures of mercy, of love and of the power of God; their thoughts, their hearts and their hopes would turn towards Jesus, and Jesus alone; they would know, then, that the power, the mercy and the compassion of Jesus are always active, always efficacious, and above all, always at the service of the penitent sinner. Her people would know, at the same time, that these treasures of the mercy of the Saviour, who is both God and man, are monopolized by nobody; that they are not the property of any saints in particular, but that they are the treasures of every sinner who has liberty to draw therefrom, according to his repentance, love and faith.

"Whatsoever ye shall ask from my Father in my name," said Jesus Christ, "shall be given you." After such a declaration from the very lips of the Saviour, how can we believe that it is necessary for one to address the saints in order to propitiate him?

For why should Jesus Christ, in heaven, be less ready to listen to me and pity me than St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Mary or any other saint to whom I might wish to address myself? Can the humanity of St. Peter, St. Paul or St. Mary be more perfect than the humanity of Jesus Christ? Why should this be? And where shall we find reason for such a monstrous doctrine? To assert, as the Church of Rome does, that the saints, being nothing above us by nature, and having been sinners like us, know better our miseries, and ought to sympathize with us more than Jesus Christ, because he is incapable of sin, is to deny the humanity as well as the divinity of the Saviour; it is to deny the gospel which teaches us that Jesus has not only known and understood our miseries infinitely better than all the saints, but also paid, even to the last farthing, the debt of our sins, and washed them away in his blood.

How would Jesus have been able to bear our sins upon Himself? How could He have charged himself with our iniquities and paid all that was due to the justice of God, without knowing them perfectly, without comprehending their number, their nature and their malignity? But, above all, how could the Saviour of the world have undertaken to pay the debt of our iniquities if these iniquities had not excited in His mind a degree of sympathy, of compassion and of love of which all the saints together are incapable?

Once more: let us forget, for a moment, that Jesus Christ is God; let us suppose that He is only a man, and let us fix our thoughts on this human person. We ask, can we find in the Sacred Scripture a single expression which would lead us to think that, as a man, Jesus is less kind, less patient or less merciful towards us than St. Peter, St. Paul or St. Mary? And moreover

in order that I may address myself to one saint in preference to another, I must have reason to believe that this saint will be more favorable to me than he to whom I have preferred him. To address myself to St. Mary, for example, in preference to Jesus, and to ask this woman, blessed among all women, to speak for me to Jesus Christ, I must believe that she will hear and answer me more surely and more quickly than He. For, from the moment that I believe that Jesus will be more favorable to me and more compassionate to my miseries than Mary or any other saint, I would go to Jesus. Nothing more simple and more natural, and for this very reason, nothing more powerful than this argument. Well, plain good sense, as well as the gospel, tells us that if Jesus were only a man in heaven, He would be there, as He was upon earth, the most compassionate, the most loving, the most charitable and the most influential of holy men. And consequently (always supposing that He is only a man) even then I would address only Him in my prayers. It is in this man Jesus that I ought to put my greatest confidence, it is from this man Jesus that I should expect the promptest aid; it is to this man Jesus: that I ought to speak with most faith and pleasure.

And the most ignorant, as well as the most learned of my brethren of the Church of Rome will be forced to confess that I am acting wisely. They could not but confess that those who put their trust in saints, less kind, less influential, less merciful than my saint protector and friend Jesus, would, to say the least it, be deficient in wisdom. But would anyone dare to say that the holy humanity of Jesus has lost any of its love, its mercy, its influence or its kindness towards the sinner, by its perfect union with His divinity?

No! It is impossible that any Roman Catholic would dare, designedly, to utter a word so wicked and senseless.

Well, it is, nevertheless, what all Roman Catholics unconsciously do and say each time they shrink from speaking to Jesus Christ, under the pretext that He will not hear them because of their sins, and when they address the saints whom they believe to be more ready to hear! If it is possible that man in heaven loves us and hears us with pleasure, it is still more possible and more certain that the God man will listen to us with pleasure, and answer us in His infinite mercy.

It is, then, inconceivable folly to leave the God man, to shrink from speaking to the God Man, and to distrust the God Man, in order to address a man and to put all our hope in a mere man.

But this folly becomes an inexcusable crime, an abomination, an act of idolatry, when this God-man has descended from heaven to tell us himself that he is our friend, our brother, our saviour, our advocate, our all – our God, infinitely good, infinitely merciful, and infinitely kind.